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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNJ #0352/01 0651656
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 061656Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3278
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0967
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0271
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0639
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0503
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0322
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0053
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0717
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1198
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 2477
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1584
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0946
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0612

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000352

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, INR, DRL, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA;
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICAWATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CHAD: UN RESREP DISCUSSES ELECTIONS WITH MPS
CANDIDATE DEBY

REF: NDJAMENA 296

¶1. (SBU) Summary: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Head Amaning told Misoffs March 4 that he had an encouraging meeting with President Deby March 1 in which Deby agreed that opposition participation in the upcoming elections was worth working for. While Deby refused to consider postponing the planned May 3 election, he was reportedly interested in Amaning's suggestion that the opposition might consider improvements to next year's communal and legislative elections sufficient inducement to participate in the May 3 election. Amaning is working the opposition this week and will go back to Deby with some concrete ideas. As expected, at its third congress March 5, the ruling party named Deby as its presidential candidate. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Resrep Kingsley Amaning told Charge and poloff March 4 that he had followed up on his promise to EU, French, and U.S. ambassadors February 24 (reftel) with a successful effort to meet President Deby. He noted that he had not been given a hearing by Deby for many months (ever since the referendum that had changed the constitution to permit Deby to run for a third term). As the months had dragged by, Amaning said, he had more or less given up on the electoral reform effort, but he had now changed his mind. He believed that although it was late in the day, it was not a lost cause. Even in two months, there was much that could be done to help the May 3 election. Now, he said his sights were on a longer-term process that would put in place concrete improvements (along the lines of the UNDP's electoral study) for the proposed follow-on communal and legislative elections. This was the plan that he had now sought to lay before Deby and would lay before the principal opposition leaders. He had told the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior that this time around, it was absolutely essential that he see the President, and the meeting transpired almost immediately.

¶3. (SBU) Amaning said he confronted Deby with a simple choice. Choice One: Deby would go into the May 3 election on his own, with a boycott from all the significant opposition figures and with the expected reaction from the international community. The Americans would be particularly hostile, at a

time when Deby had gotten bad press in his contretemps with the World Bank. Choice Two: Deby could agree to begin a process that would alleviate some of the flaws of the May 3 election but, more importantly, would pave the way for credible legislative elections in 2007. In return for a solid commitment from Deby, Amaning would try to bring along the principal opposition leaders and the international community. Deby was positive: he agreed to consider Amaning's proposal, but on the understanding that May 3 could not be altered. Deby stated that changing the May 3 date ran the risk of plunging the country into a constitutional "void."

¶4. (SBU) Amaning said that he was already working on the opposition. He had not yet met any of the members of the opposition coalition CPDC, who had all been traveling in the South, but he had had a heart-to-heart with opposition maverick Yorongar (not a member of the CPDC). Yorongar had given Amaning a list of unrealistic demands, to which Amaning responded, "You can boycott the election, but what good will it do you? If you depend on Zaghawa rebels toppling Deby, you may be sure that under any new Zaghawa leadership you will have no more role than you do today; or you boycott the election and Deby takes the election virtually unopposed, and you also continue to have no more role than you do today; or you participate in a reform process which Deby says he is accepting, and you may possibly have a role." According to Amaning, Yorongar changed his combative tone and said he would give serious consideration to Amaning's ideas.

¶5. (SBU) Amaning said that he did not like the concept of national dialogue in the form of a big conference ("talk-fest"), in which everyone made formal speeches and talked past each other. Nor did he contemplate bringing in a huge gaggle of the opposition. Instead he would hand pick

the most substantial opposition figures and the two key ministers, Interior and Planning (very close to Deby), for low-key, practical discussions, while insisting on staying in touch with Deby to ensure he stuck to his commitment.

¶6. (U) In the meantime, the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) held its third congress March 4-6 and nominated Deby March 5 as its candidate in the upcoming election. In the opening ceremonies, delayed one day and attended by poloff, Deby looked to be in good health, good enough at least to stride vigorously down the steps and beam at his packed audience (primed by an hour-and-a-half wait through high-decibel patriotic music).

Comment

¶7. (SBU) The imminent approach of election day may be focussing President Deby's mind on how he would like the elections to be viewed by major international partners. While UNDP Res Rep Amaning was invigorated by what he saw as the President's receptivity to his frank assessment, it remains to be seen what the President has in mind as worth conceding in order to bring in mainstream "opposition" participation. It may well turn out that he only seeks the window-dressing that could be provided by a few compliant and lesser known "opposition" candidates who have less onerous demands as far as free and fair elections. End Comment.

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